



THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Vol. XL, No. 3.]

MARCH, 1866.

[Whole No. 986

SERMON IV.

BY REV. HENRY F. SMITH.

PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH, BLOOMFIELD, N. J.

CITIZENSHIP WITH THE SAINTS.

"Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints."—
Eph. ii. 19.

THE Bible is a revelation of spiritualities. In rendering its doctrines clear to the consciousness of men the Holy Spirit uses analogies common to every-day life. The Christian is called a "warrior," "runner," "pilgrim," "priest," "a laborer," "a light."

The Christian community is termed "an assembly," "the tribes," "a household," *citizens*.

In portions of the Old Testament, Jerusalem, the city of God, typifies the band of the faithful. The figure is used in considerable detail. God is called the *founder* of the city; its *foundation* is the chosen and precious Jesus; its walls are *salvation* because of the perfect provision of the covenant for its preservation; its *gates* are named *praise* either in regard to the beautiful brilliancy of Zion's portals, or the grandeur and worth of Him through whom she becomes a praise in the whole earth. She is not without a river whose streams make glad the city; and God her king

dwells in her. We turn from the rich tempting field for meditation offered in the figures just named to consider the *social* aspect in which our text appears.

To constitute a city in the most comprehensive sense, we need more than stones and mortar, walls and gates. We must have the active surging life. What were a disentombed Herculaneum with perfect temple, and market, and palace, without the tide of citizenship pouring over its pavements? and what is an ecclesiastical organization without spiritual life? The character of the citizenship declares the true status of the city. I understand the phrase "fellow-citizens with the saints," to include all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and while it is admitted that there are those who have never made an outward profession of allegiance to Zion's king comprised within this spiritual organization, it is urged that such should make a public profession, in order that the visible citizenship may, as far as possible, be commensurate with the spiritual.

I. Let us examine THE LAW of citizenship. To the chief captain who boasted of the great sum with which he bought his freedom, Paul answered, "but I was free born." When the same apostle speaks of his spiritual standing, his statement is far different. In the text the first state of the Ephesian brethren is expressed by two words of peculiar intensity. The first word *Ξενοι* means foreigners having no right in the community. The second word *παροικοι* means guests in a family having no relationship. Natural men have no *right in themselves* to God's covenant mercies—no relationship to the redeemed. In verse 12, they are called "*aliens* from the commonwealth of Israel," and "strangers to the covenants of promise;" and lest any should suppose that this condition was peculiar to the Ephesians, Paul uses the first person plural. "*We* were the children of wrath," (v. 3) "*we* were dead in sins." (v. 5.) Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus declares in universal form, "Except (*τις*) *any* one be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The law of citizenship requires dispositions and actions directly opposed to those manifested by "*strangers and aliens*." To accomplish this the spirit of God works mightily in their hearts, revolutionizing their views and feelings so that they are made "*new creatures*." From the nature of the new relation, however, it follows that the subject *willingly* and *heartily* yields obedience. The law has two prominent claims. (a.) In his relation to the head of Government the citizen must exercise constant unwavering *fealty*. He must recognize but one supreme source of legislation; and all customs and precedents which conflict with the divine statutes he must regard wrong, even though they may have the countenance and support of wise and influential men. He may not modify the divine requirements to bring

them into agreement with the polished usages of the world ; he may not turn the eye toward the divine throne while the hand is reached down to clutch the vain things of earth for his selfish pleasure ; he may not be a saint at church and a worldling in the parlor and the counting room. Christian citizenship can not be put off and on like a cloak. Honest, pure fealty must be *always* practiced ; the personal glory of Zion's king, and the enlargement and grandeur of the city of God are the first great subjects which underlie the motives and acts of the renewed man. This results not from cringing fear, but it is the fruit of sweet abiding love to Him who is altogether lovely, and worthy of our highest obedience forever.

(b.) Again, *The law of citizenship requires a hearty fellowship and affection for all the citizens.* This is the certificate of spiritual "naturalization." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for the other." The ungodly have made much capital out of the seeming lack of this affectionate spirit among the professed followers of Jesus. We own that our mutual love is far below the heavenly requirement which is "love one another as *I have loved you* ;" but we claim that every one who loves God, loves all who are born of God. With the epistle of John in our hand we can take no other ground. True, the different portions of the great commonwealth have their peculiarities and imperfections ; but amidst divergencies of views and varieties of temperament there is a deep everflowing undercurrent of *love*. The wards of the city may have their local feelings, and may array themselves under their peculiar banners for the maintenance of minor points which seem important to them, but when Zion's necessities call for a vigorous united effort against her foes, her various cohorts rush to the conflict as the men of many states and opinions lately poured out their treasure and blood to defend the purity, and insure the supremacy of our insulted flag. True Christian love, without compromising one conscientious conviction, reaches over nationalities and denominations. The believer says to his brother, as Jehu said to Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, "Is thy heart right as my heart is with thy heart? If it be, give me thy hand." 2 Kings, x. 15. It is well known that Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Wesley differed widely upon some theological points, and in some of their methods of work. Some of their inexperienced followers did not *abound* in the charity that thinketh no evil. One of these neophytes once expressed a doubt concerning the salvation of Wesley and his followers, and said, "Mr. Whitfield, when we get to heaven do you think we shall see Mr. Wesley?" "No, sir," replied the large-hearted Evangelist. "I fear not, for he will be *so near the throne*, and we shall be at *such a distance*, we shall hardly get sight of him." What blended humility and love! How just the rebuke to narrow-minded bigotry!

Why should not our love be more apparent? We are *fellow-citizens*, bought by the same precious blood, sanctified by the same spirit, children of one Father, brethren of the same loving Jesus. Professor of godliness you may not withhold your love from a Christian and remain guiltless, for the word of the Lord declares, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath *seen*, how can he love God whom he hath *not* seen? And this commandment have we from him that he who loveth God love his brother also." 1 John iv. 20, 21.

Let every one heed this solemn test. You are not bound to sanction, or view with complacency, every act of your partially sanctified brother; but you may not withhold your Christian love while you can discern any evidence that grace reigns in his heart.

If we strive to honor the requirements of this two-fold relation, men will "take knowledge" that we are really citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. Let fidelity to God and love to the brethren be inscribed on our hearts, and shown in our lives; so shall we prove our franchise, and enjoy the abiding consciousness that we are no more strangers and aliens, but fellow-citizens with the saints.

II. Let us note some of THE PRIVILEGES OF CITIZENSHIP.

The royal charter guarantees so many and distinguished immunities, that our time will scarcely permit their enumeration; it is therefore proposed to confine our contemplation to a few of these privileges. (a) *Utmost security*. A commonwealth that can not afford protection to its constituents is unstable, but one abundantly able and willing to protect, is strong in numbers and influence. The most permanent, however, of earthly governments contain elements of weakness. The community that to-day reposes in the calm rich sunlight of peace, may soon be wrapped in the storm-clouds of revolution, and be rocked in the earthquake of disintegration. Changeable man with his fickle diplomacy and unsanctified ambition, renders things political uncertain; but we are citizens of a kingdom that can not be moved. Zion's foundations strike deeper than the structure of earthly politics; and though successive changes sweep through outward history, the inward spiritual community is immovable.

"Zion enjoys her monarch's love
Secure against a threatening hour;
Nor can her firm foundations move,
Built on his truth and armed with power."

This characteristic of our citizenship should attract special notice, and call out special gratitude in this time of great commotions. What trepidation in the old world have the last few

years witnessed! Thrones have rocked, crowned heads have bowed, boundaries have bent, kingdoms have vanished. At last the whirlwind has reached us. Our hearts beat quickly to-day as we see our dearly-bought and much loved liberties quivering in the balance.* How comforting in these times of trial to look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities. We say,

"Beneath the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure."

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." Ps. xli. 1, 3, 5.

(b.) *Delightful associations.* Paul declares to the Hebrews (chap. xii. 22-24): "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

While the full realization of these glowing assertions is yet in the future, the manner of the apostle evidently indicates a *present* communion with these heavenly realities. "Ye are come." Let our meditations linger a few moments upon these blessed associations. "An innumerable company of angels." The scriptures teach that angels sustain intimate relations to God's chosen. Under both dispensations they have ministered to Zion's citizens, instructing, supporting, comforting, guiding, preserving. The angels of God's little ones do always behold the Father's face; they are declared by Paul to furnish a reason for decorum and propriety in Christian assemblies. Though we may not come into visible, tangible connection with them, we are led into spiritual union with their holy characters, and approximate to their heavenly employments. Blessed thought! Through Christ I am allied to all holy beings. I am a "*fellow-citizen*" in "the general assembly." The great company of blood-washed saints—the church of the first-born—all the good of every clime and age are allied to me by virtue of the one sacrifice through which all saints are drawn to Christ and each to the other. We have come to "Jesus, the mediator of the

* As written and delivered in 1862.

new covenant." Zion is Christ's capital. He does not shut himself in his palace and exclude the citizens from his presence. He is approachable at all times, and he frequently walks among the "golden candlesticks." What citizen of Zion does not remember with delight the sweet interviews of the throne-room, when Jesus' glories thrilled the whole soul with joy unspeakable? Who does not recall with pleasure the many visits received from the king who came with arms full of blessings, causing the soul to glow, and happiness to rise beyond bounds?

(c.) But now turn to a still higher privilege. It is great honor to dwell in the house of the Lord forever; but to be *blood relation to the king*—to be a *son* rather than a servant—this is distinction unspeakable. Yet such is the glorious truth. We who were strangers and aliens are now made sons of God—**BRETHREN TO KING JESUS.** Every saint is a Lord of the realm, a partaker of regal dignity. See that poor unknown man, whose clothing is scanty, and his food coarse. *He loves Jesus.* He feeds upon rich spiritual food here, and when he dies attendant angels convey him to the abodes of bliss. The body moulders in a common coffin, in a grave unmarked by tokens of affection. Permit your thoughts to run forward to the resurrection day. Then the body of the rich sensualist, which was entombed decked in gold and purple, shall rise in the rags of shame and guilt, while from that *poor* coffin shall come a form robed in the pure garments of Christ's righteousness; and the glow of that countenance made "like the Lord," will show his regal rank. O man! never mistreat or neglect a poor saint. Remember that the blood royal flows in his veins. He is a prince in a peasant's garb.

(d.) The fourth privilege is *The attainment of highest unfading honors.* Paul mentions in another place, "The whole family in heaven and earth." Though the city has two parts it makes but one community. The Euphrates ran through Babylon, and there is a river of grace gliding through the city of God to gladden it with its streams; so there is another river whose waters sometimes appear to us dark and turbid; but when light from the citadel above falls upon them they sparkle and glow in the radiance of immortality. On the "*other side*" are hosts of citizens raised to indescribable dignity. The devoted Enoch, the faithful Abraham, Moses, the great legislator, and Daniel, the conscientious prime minister, are there. Elijah's chariot glows near the throne. David, the sweet singer, leads the redeemed in the great chorus of "worthy is the Lamb," in response to patient Job's sweet solo, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Apostles and martyrs are there. There are the white-haired servants of God, who, after serving their generation by the will of God, fell on sleep; there are the millions of little ones taken from earth's chilling frosts to heaven's eternal sunshine.

"The saints on earth, and all the dead
But one communion make;
All join in Christ, their living head,
And of his grace partake."

Every citizen of the portion upon this side shall, in due time, go yonder to participate in unfading honors, which none can describe fully. The beloved John uses strong language to portray the city of God in her glory. Streets of gold;—gates of precious stones;—light exceeding and eclipsing the glory of the sun;—robes of snowy whiteness;—crowns of jeweled gold—harmonies composed of sweetest harp melodies, accompanied by roaring cataracts and pealing thunders—with angelic symphonies, and the great chorus of all the blood-washed, fail to give us a full conception of the glory that awaits the saints. The son of Rev. Dr. Hawes, just after entering the ministry, was mortally injured by a runaway horse. As he approached the separating river, his mother read to him from the eleventh of Hebrews. He realized that his soul was departing; and alluding to the verses we have already quoted, he exclaimed: "Mother! mother! *hurry on to the PROSPECTS! Hurry on to the PROSPECTS!* and just as she reached the "prospects," and was reading "Ye are come," etc., his soul soared away to the "other side."

IMPROVEMENT.

(1.) Thank God that we have been made citizens. We were no more deserving, no better qualified than others. We must, therefore, say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." Eph. i. 3, 4.

(2.) *We must walk worthy of our citizenship.* Though saved by grace, we may not continue in sin. The fact that we enjoy our privileges through grace should make us the more careful to please him who hath called us. Walk circumspectly, for the eyes of men and angels and God are upon you.

(3.) A few words to those who are still strangers and foreigners. You must become "fellow-citizens with the saints," or you shall be fellow-sufferers with the damned forever. As the society of the kingdom will increase the bliss of the saved, so will the company of the wicked augment the woe of the lost. You must be reconciled to God here if you dwell with him hereafter. O, cease your rebellion! Cry out for mercy!

Does any one say, O, that I were a citizen! Dear friend, listen to a word of direction. The city has but one gate of entrance, which is too small to admit you with your self-righteous-

ness, worldliness and pride. You must be stripped of all these. Directly before the gate is an altar upon which burns a precious sacrifice. You cannot approach the gate but by the altar. The victim is *Jesus*! Confess your guilt, look to the Lamb, and with sincere faith say:

"Thy blood, dear Jesus, thine alone,
Hath sovereign virtue to atone;
Here will I rest my only plea,
When I approach, great God, to thee."

You shall receive a precious pardon, and full justification. Your citizenship shall be fully established, and all the riches of the new covenant shall be yours.

SERMON V.

BY REV. ENOCH POND, D.D.,

PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, BANGOR, MAINE.

THE DOCTRINE OF ANNIHILATION UNREASONABLE AND UNSCRIPTURAL.

"If thy hand offend thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter halt into life, than, having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."—MARK, ix. 43-46.

In these words our Saviour contradicts, in the plainest terms, the popular and somewhat prevalent doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked. He here assures us that the wicked shall be, not annihilated, but cast into hell—into the fire that never shall be quenched; "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." He thrice repeats this fearful declaration, thus giving us the highest assurance he could give, that the wicked in hell are to be miserable for ever. It is proposed in this discourse:

I. To describe the doctrine of annihilation, as now most commonly received:

II. To examine the Scriptures chiefly relied upon in support of it; and,

III. To show, from various Scriptures, that the wicked are not to be annihilated, but punished forever in the future world.

I. I am to describe the doctrine of annihilation, as now most commonly received.

At different periods, the doctrine of annihilation has assumed different forms. Some have insisted that annihilation is the lot of all men, and that it takes place in death. Death is to be the end of us; it terminates our being; it is, as it is sometimes called, an eternal sleep. Those who hold this opinion are, in general, *materialists*; they deny that man has any soul, as distinct from the body. He is *all body—altogether material*; and consequently, when the body dissolves in death, the entire man goes out of existence. This was the doctrine of the ancient Sadducees, whom our Saviour reasoned with and refuted.

Other annihilationists (who are also materialists) limit the final destruction to *the wicked*, and suppose it to take place, not at death, but in the general judgment. The whole man does indeed die, and sleep in the grave. He has no longer an intelligent, conscious existence. But then the sleep is not eternal. There shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust, and all shall stand together at the judgment-seat. But at the close of the judgment, while the righteous shall enter on an immortal life, the wicked will be utterly destroyed—annihilated.

But neither of the above theories of annihilation is the one most commonly advocated at the present day. The most plausible view of the doctrine, and that most generally received—at least by those who have any claim to be regarded as evangelical Christians—is the following: Man has a soul distinct from the body, and was designed and is adapted to be immortal; but by sinning against God, man has forfeited and lost his immortality. The death threatened to ~~our first~~ parents, in case of disobedience, was annihilation; and the threat would have been immediately executed, but that a reprieve was mercifully granted, that so they and their posterity might have a probation of grace, and such a probation we now enjoy. Christ has suffered for us; free offerings of mercy are made to us in his name, and all who accede to these offers will receive, in the most literal acceptation of the terms, *eternal life*. Their lost immortality will be restored to them, and will be a blessed and glorious immortality. But upon all who refuse to accept of Christ, during the time of their probation, the sentence of annihilation will be finally executed; they will be, in the most literal sense of the term, *destroyed*. This destruction may not fall upon them immediately after death, or after the judgment; it may be preceded by a long period of suffering in the other world. But ultimately, all the wicked will be annihilated; they will be as though they had never been. Such is the doctrine, and we are now to examine,

II. The Scriptures chiefly relied upon to support it.

First of all, it is alleged that death literally signifies extinction of being, that so our first parents must have understood it; and that wherever the word death is used in the Scriptures to set forth the final doom of the wicked, it can mean nothing else. But, is it true that death literally and properly signifies extinction of being, or, which is the same, annihilation? What does it annihilate? Not the body; for the dead body still remains. It may be seen and handled as before. No one can doubt this, who has ever seen a corpse, or eaten the flesh of a slaughtered animal, or burned the wood of a dead tree. And if death does not annihilate material substances, much less does it put an end to human souls. Who ever heard of a soul's being annihilated? Where did it live? To whom did it belong? The sacred writers often use the words *dead* and *death*, as applicable to the soul; but never in the sense of annihilation. Thus, our Saviour says to the church in Sardis: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art *dead*." But he did not mean to represent this whole church as having been annihilated. "She that liveth in pleasure is *dead* while she liveth." "He that loveth not his brother abideth in *death*. You hath he quickened who *were dead* in trespasses and sins." "To be carnally minded is *death*; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." In all these, and many like passages, the word death is used in reference to the soul, importing what is commonly called spiritual death. But none of them set forth the annihilation of the soul; so far from this, the very idea of annihilation is precluded.

We also read in the Scriptures of the *second death*—the same which is sometimes called *eternal death*. But here, again, is no annihilation. "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."—Rev., xxi. 8. We have here a divinely inspired definition or description of the second death. We are told what it is, and, as before, the idea of annihilation is precluded.

But there are other words, besides death, on which great stress is laid, in the argument for annihilation. The wicked are said in the Scriptures to be consumed, destroyed, burned up, lost—a phraseology occurring with awful frequency in the Bible, and which can import nothing less than their utter annihilation. Such is the literal and proper meaning of the words. But is this true? Is this the proper meaning of the words, as they are used by the sacred writers? Joshua and his army destroyed the Canaanites. But did he annihilate them? Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, but he did not annihilate it. "O, Israel,

thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help." Had these Israelites annihilated themselves? If so, with what propriety is it added: "In me is thy help." Our Saviour is said, "through death, to have destroyed him who hath the power of death, that is the devil." But did our Saviour literally annihilate the devil through his death?

The strongest passage in the Bible in support of annihilation is, perhaps, that in Malachi, iv. 1: "Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, and they that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Now, supposing a thing to be burned up, so as to leave neither root nor branch, is it thereby annihilated? By no means. To burn up and consume a material substance is only to decompose it and change its form. The fuel which we burn upon the hearth passes into other forms of existence, but not one particle is lost. Water may be evaporated, gas may be burned, but the substance of both is still in being. The dissolved particles may be collected, and they will be found to weigh as much as before; and so in the entire range of material substances. Through every disorganization and reconstruction; under the action of every element—heat, light, electricity—no matter what, the particles composing the substance still remain, and for aught we know, will remain for ever.

The state of the wicked in the other world is sometimes represented by the word *lost*; and to be lost is thought by some to be the same as annihilated. But a comparison of passages shows that there is no soundness in this argument. "This, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Here the prodigal son is said to have been both *dead* and *lost*, and yet he was all the while alive, and ere long, was restored to his father. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which *was lost*," not annihilated; for in that case there would be nothing left to seek or save. It will be said, perhaps, that we use the word annihilate in too strict a sense. The particles of which a man consists may not be literally annihilated, yet, if they become so disorganized and scattered that he no longer exists as a man—an intelligent, conscious, active being, he is, as to all primitive or practical purposes, annihilated. But how are the parts and particles of which a man consists to be so disorganized and scattered that he is no longer a conscious, active being? If he was all particles—altogether material, perhaps this might be done. But we now reason with those who believe that man has a soul as well as a body; a soul that can exist without the body; a soul that is not made up of particles, but is one simple, uniform, spiritual substance, like that of God. And how is such a soul to lose permanently and forever its active,

conscious existence, but by a literal annihilation? It cannot be disorganized and its particles separated, for it is not made up of particles. Such is not the nature of its substance or existence. Obviously a soul, such as we all possess, must exist for ever, a thinking, feeling, conscious, active being, or it must be annihilated.

Having thus shown that the Scriptures chiefly relied on in support of the doctrine of annihilation fail to prove it, I proceed,

III. To urge arguments against the doctrine.

1. It is a strong objection to the theory of annihilation, that it contradicts, palpably and confessedly, the great doctrine of the soul's immortality. The immortality of the human soul is not only assumed and inculcated in the Scriptures, but it is so clearly taught by the voice of nature, that nearly all nations, even those who are without the Bible, have been agreed in accepting it. But according to the views we are considering, for those multitudes of the human race who die in their sins, there is no immortality; they are to lose their existence. In course of time they are to be annihilated. The immortal spark is to be put out forever. The very heathen have light enough to enter their protest against a doctrine such as this.

2. Annihilation is not the penalty of God's law, and is no proper punishment for sin. We know what the penalty of God's law is, for it has been already inflicted. It was inflicted upon the angels when they sinned. For them there was no probation of grace. They had no reprieve. The penalty of the law fell upon them in the day of their transgression, and has been upon them ever since. And what was it? They were not annihilated, but "were cast down to hell," where they "are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."—2 Peter, ii. 4.; Jude, 6. Again, the penalty of the law will be inflicted upon all the wicked at the close of the judgment. The wicked will then be brought up together for trial; they will have a trial, at the close of which their sentence is pronounced, and is immediately executed. "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment."—Mat., xxv. 41, 46.

I know it is said that annihilation is everlasting punishment, because it is everlasting in its consequences. But as well might it be said that hanging or flogging is everlasting punishment, because they are everlasting in their consequences. Indeed, with much more propriety might it be said of the ordinary modes of human punishment that they are everlasting; for they are followed with a train of consequences that will have no end.

Whereas, to the subjects of it, annihilation cuts off all consequences. A perpetual non-entity is beyond the reach of consequences forever. And this shows us that annihilation, so far from being everlasting punishment, is properly no punishment at all; on the contrary, it cuts off all punishment; it renders it impossible that the subjects of it should ever be punished more. Punishment necessarily implies the existence of a subject to endure it. If a just punishment, it implies the existence of a guilty subject, who feels, or who ought to feel, that his punishment is deserved. But on the theory before us, the subject of punishment is no longer in existence; he is a non-entity—nothing; and how is it possible to punish nothing?

The advocates of annihilation seem not quite satisfied, after all, to make it the whole penalty of the law, and that for two reasons. In the first place, it does not come quite up to what both the Scriptures and their own consciences set forth as the penalty of the law; and secondly, it leaves no room for different *degrees* of future punishment, making it the same to all. And so they couple with annihilation—or some of them do—long periods of antecedent suffering. “The doom of the wicked,” says one, “is inconceivably dreadful. The duration of their suffering may be a long period prior to their final destruction.” But annihilation, on this ground, so far from being considered a punishment, is rather a release. How must the miserable subjects of these dreadful antecedent sufferings, look forward to it, and pray for it as their last and only hope! The devils who we are told, are to be annihilated, have already been suffering for many thousands of years; and they are yet to suffer we know not how long. With what intense desire must they be looking forward to the time when their existence, and with it all their miseries, shall come to a final end? And yet we are told that this longed-for release is the major part of the penalty of the divine law, if not, indeed (as others say), the whole of it—all that God has threatened as the punishment of sin.

3. The doctrine of annihilation is disproved and contradicted by a vast amount of Scripture testimony. It is contradicted in the Old Testament. The prophet Daniel represents the wicked, in the last great day, as not annihilated, but raised “to shame and everlasting contempt.”—Daniel, xii. 2. In the prophecy of Isaiah, the sinners in Zion are represented as afraid, not of annihilation, but of something infinitely worse. “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings.”—Isaiah, xxxiii. 14.

But in the New Testament the evidence in proof of eternal sinning and suffering, and of course, against annihilation, thickens, and becomes more decisive. The declarations in the text are enough to settle this question, if there were no other. Speak-

ing expressly of the miseries of hell, our Saviour repeatedly assures us, and in the most solemn terms, that the worm dieth not there, and that its fires are not quenched. Who will dare affirm, after this, that the worm of a miserable existence is extinguished in that world, and that its fires are quenched forever?

But this passage does not stand alone. It is supported by many others, some of which have been already quoted. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," implying the everlasting existence of its guilty subjects to endure it. "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." I know it is said that though the fire is everlasting, those who are plunged into it may not live and suffer in it forever. But this is a mere quibble. Why should the duration of the fire be specified at all, if the suffering was not to be commensurate with it?

At the conclusion of his parables of the tares, and of the net, our Saviour sets forth the final destiny of the wicked: "The angels shall come forth, and shall sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, a form of expression indicating a state of intense and continued suffering, but which can never be reconciled with the idea of annihilation.

The apostle Paul tells us that, "unto those who, by a patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality," God will "render eternal life." But "unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth," he will render "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." This, and not annihilation, is to be the portion of their cup.

It is said of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the surrounding cities, that "giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh," they "are set forth as examples, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."—Jude, 7. I know it is pretended that the language here refers to the guilty cities, and not to their inhabitants. But was it the cities, or the inhabitants, that "gave themselves over to fornication, and went after strange flesh?" Besides, the cities, as such, have not "suffered the vengeance of eternal fire." They were consumed and sunk in a little time, and the Dead Sea has rolled its waves over them ever since.

And what are we to think of the following passages from the Revelation? "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark on his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever; and they

have no rest, day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." In other passages, it is said of the final enemies of God, that "they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."—Rev., xiv. 9-11; xx. 10. Annihilationists have no way to get over these passages, but by saying, with the Universalist, that the words "forever and ever," *may* signify a limited duration. But such a supposition is impossible. The writers of the New Testament have used this phraseology more than twenty times, and the writer of the Apocalypse fourteen times, and always (unless it be in the cases before us) to denote an endless duration; and yet, by these decisive, unambiguous words, is here set forth the duration of the miseries of the lost. Really, if this does not decide the question against annihilationists and universalists, as to the endless punishment of the wicked, we may well despair of its being ever decided by words. No form of speech more decisive than that here employed can ever be used.

Some tell us that this doctrine of annihilation, if it be an error, is a harmless one; it can be followed by no injurious results. But I cannot be of this opinion. All error is more or less dangerous; but the one we have considered is, in some of its aspects, peculiarly so. While it carries with it an air of plausibility, and claims to be regarded as evangelical, its tendency is to pervert the Gospel, and take away its saving power. It does this by detracting from the honor and authority of the divine law, and diminishing, in the same proportion, our sense of the great evil of sin. When we look at the fearful penalty which God has denounced against sin—the greatest which he can inflict, or we endure—one differing in degree, according to the degree of our guilt, but in all cases measureless in duration; we see that sin must be an infinite evil, or, if any dislike the term infinite, it must be the greatest evil which we can possibly commit, and deserves the severest punishment which we can endure. Such are the views which the commonly received doctrine of eternal punishment is fitted to impress, as to the evil of sin. But if we take away from the fearful penalty of the law; if we remove it or cut it short by annihilation, by just so much we weaken the law. We detract from its majesty, and its binding authority. Our sense of the evil of sin is proportionally diminished, so that we may never see it as it is, and repent of it in dust and ashes. This doctrine of annihilation detracts also from the worth, and even from the work of redeeming mercy. Redemption from everlasting burnings is one thing; deliverance from annihilation is quite another. The former requires an infinite atonement; the latter may not. The former creates an exigency and a necessity for the interposition of the eternal Son of God; the latter may be effected in some other way. It may be effected

immediately by the Father, or through the instrumentality of some inferior personage. Hence the connection logically, and in most instances actually, between the doctrine of annihilation, and Unitarian speculations as to the Trinity and the person of Christ.

The doctrine we have considered has also a lax moral tendency; it weakens some of the strongest motives which God, in his mercy, has thrown around us to deter from sin. The penalty of God's law is a dreadful penalty, warning us off from the practice of sin by every motive of horror and of fear; and yet even this is no more than sufficient to sustain the authority of law, and deter from sin. In myriads of instances it has proved insufficient to prevent transgression. In full view of the devouring fire and everlasting burnings, creatures have had the boldness—the madness to transgress. What, then, must be the effect of diminishing the penalty of God's law, and ultimately of taking it quite away? of quenching the devouring fire—of dissipating the column of smoke and flame which is to ascend up from the bottomless pit forever?

The natural effect of such teaching is perfectly obvious; it tends to weaken those good moral influences which God, in his mercy, has thrown around us. It tends to encourage the wicked in their evil courses, and to make them bold and easy in their sins. The worst they have to fear is annihilation, which puts an end at once to all suffering; and they are quite willing to meet such an issue, if they may be indulged at present in the wicked courses which they love. It may be doubted whether any sinner was ever awakened, convicted, and truly converted, under the influence of this doctrine. Of course, I do not say that all believers in annihilation reason after the manner I have described, and draw from it encouragement in the practice of wickedness; but I do say that such are the natural *tendencies* of the doctrine, and were it generally to prevail, these tendencies would soon be manifest in the decline and ultimate prostration of evangelical religion, both in principle and practice. Let us beware, then, of the insidious error; mischief is concealed under it, and will, ere long, spring out of it. Let us hold fast the truth, as God has revealed it, endeavoring to feel and to exemplify its saving power. Great evils often result from apparently slight beginnings. "A little leaveneth the whole lump." And in view of the fearful doom which certainly awaits the wicked, if they persist in sin, let all of this character be now persuaded to abandon it. God has been faithful to warn us of what is before us, and is mercifully calling upon us to escape from the wrath to come. Why should we not take warning? Why not heed and obey the gracious call? While there is set before us an ark of safety and an open door, why not enter in at once, and live forever?

SERMON VI.

SINS OF THE TONGUE.

“Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.”—Ps. xxxiv. 13.

It is remarkable how much there is in the Scriptures against all evil speaking, and with what abhorrence God regards this sin. From the history of the race, it appears that the sin of detraction, evil speaking, and falsehood, is one of the first developments of a depraved heart, and is the most common and prolific source of mischief in the world. It is an evil against which virtue affords no protection. Against its malicious assaults, no station or integrity of character can shield man or woman. While it is true, that all are ready to condemn this social evil, few vices are more widespread or less restrained by the profession of Christian principles, or by a regard for the peace and happiness of families or the welfare of society. Amidst the most terrific displays of the divine majesty and power on the Mount, God prohibited the bearing of false witness against a neighbor, but this command is so narrowed down by most men, as merely to prohibit malicious falsehood and false swearing or perjury in courts of justice. But the Psalmist took a different view of all the commands of God. He says: “thy commandment is exceeding broad,” and the Westminster Assembly of divines have defined the command as prohibiting among other things “concealing the truth: undue silence in a just cause; holding our peace when iniquity calls for either reproof from ourselves or complaint to others; speaking the truth unseasonably or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expression to the prejudice of truth or justice; speaking untruth; lying; slandering; backbiting; detracting; talebearing; whispering; scoffing; reviling; rash, harsh, and partial censuring; misconstruing intentions, words and actions; flattering; aggravating smaller faults; hiding, excusing, or extenuating sin, when called to a free confession; unnecessarily discovering of infirmities; raising false rumors; receiving and countenancing evil reports and stopping our ears against just defence, evil suspicions; envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any; endeavoring or desiring to impair it; rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy,” etc. These are only a part of what is enumerated as forbidden by this command. The Psalmist admonishes all men to avoid inflicting any of the evils here enumerated and not

to allow our lips to utter deceit, for that is the meaning of the word *guile*. The Apostle James declared a man to be a hypocrite, who professes to be a Christian and yet gives full license to his tongue. He who does not refrain from speaking evil gives painful evidence that he is not a renewed man, for a Christian will not backbite, or slander, or lend his ear to an evil report against his neighbor. Religion is designed to bring the whole man under its control, and to subdue every evil propensity, and overcome every evil habit. If the tongue be not restrained, or if there be an unrestrained propensity to sin, it proves that the work of conversion is not genuine. It seems from the frequent reference in Scripture to the improper license of the tongue, and the various forms of expression by which it is condemned—that it has ever been the besetting and prevailing sin of the race. Few, indeed, have learned fully to set a watch upon the door of their lips. The apostle declares that "the tongue cannot be tamed—it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Yet this evil the gospel seeks to regulate; the law of God shows us its nature and enormity, while grace aids us to overcome it so as to make the tongue the glory of man. It was given to man to be employed in praising God, and to be a source of rational enjoyment to man as a social being;—but it is perverted to the worst possible uses,—cursing God, and destroying the good name and peace of mankind.

From the text you must have anticipated the subject of remark—which is,

THE SINS OF THE TONGUE.

"It is with the greatest reluctance that I have yielded to my convictions of duty—to call attention to the Scriptural view of the sin of evil speaking, detraction, and slander. But it has become an evil of giant-growth. It invades not only the sanctuary of families, but the church of God. I find no pleasure in the discussion of such themes, but I should be recreant to my duty to you, should I withhold; and yet I fear to approach the subject lest I may exhibit a spirit I would rebuke in others. If this sin were confined to those who neglect religion, the case would be different. But it is the sin of the church and is so common, that no one is safe from its malign influence; especially those whose whole earthly estates consist in "a good name."

While there are doubtless some in every community, whom neither argument, nor a regard for the peace and welfare of individuals or families,—nor the command of God can hinder them from giving free circulation to every evil report, there are others, it is believed, who fall into this evil habit from mere thoughtlessness—from the mere force of habit or love of telling something new. Others there may be, who, without really designing an injury, will repeat a tale of scandal under the injunc-

tion of secrecy, and thus go the whole round of their accustomed circle and entrust the secret with each acquaintance or friend, while each individual thus intrusted with the scandal as a token of the special confidence of the talebearer, belongs to other circles, to which it must be reported under the injunction of not disclosing the source of their information; and so what was at first breathed as a suspicion, soon becomes a matter of fact that can be attested by any number of witnesses. Now, who can stand against such an influence? The extent of this evil is truly appalling. No family, no individual is beyond its withering influence. It is the moral sirocco that blasts and withers the fairest character of woman. It is a welcome guest in the places of business, in the saloons and places of resort for the idle and the vicious,—too often is it welcomed in the social circle, and becomes the staple for conversation, while it poisons the fountain of domestic bliss, or renders the innocent to become objects of the most unjust suspicion. This would not be if the tale-bearer found no encouragement from those professing godliness. If, instead of lending a half-willing ear to the tale of scandal, every professing Christian and right-minded person would frown indignantly upon the news-monger, this evil would soon be abated. It would be shorn of its power to harm, it would be deprived of its sharpest sting. But it is the indorsement which it too often receives in the church that gives it currency. It too often receives its sharpest point, its keenest edge in the hands of those professing godliness, for none others can wield it so successfully for mischief, and that too when its unsuspecting victim will be welcomed with the kiss of friendship and with smiles and flattering words, while the ruining process is going on. Let me direct your attention to a few of the many expressions of Scripture in reference to sins of the tongue—"Speak evil of no man," "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people." "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off." "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart—his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords." "Their tongue is an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit." "He that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." "An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is as a burning fire." "Death and life are in the power of the tongue; and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." "He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile." Many more expressions might be added, but these are sufficient for my purpose.

The sin of evil speaking has its various modifications or forms of manifestation, and each form has, in every community, its several representatives. Among these I class,

1st. The talebearer, or the retailer of the village gossip,

and scandal against private character. Such are usually flatterers—for the Bible has classed these together—saying: “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets, therefore meddle not with him, for he flattereth with his lips.” Either from want of capacity or of some useful topic of conversation, or from a natural or acquired propensity to deal in personal characters, there are those in every small community as well as in the more populous, who seem to thrive by retailing scandal; they are in their element when they breathe the tainted atmosphere that surrounds the scandal-mongers. When they meet, they seldom speak of anything else than the vices or failings of their neighbors. If, perchance, they hear one speak in commendation of another, they are sure to intimate that *they* could tell something which would not be to the advantage of the person spoken of, and no doubt they would if an opportunity were given. Now, it is possible that some do these things thoughtlessly, from mere habit, unconscious of the evil they are doing, yet, by their representations of pretended facts, give impressions of the character of others which are most manifestly unjust. The talebearer is not only a character marked in Scripture, but, alas! for the peace of society, is too well known in social life. The talebearer is generally lacking on all subjects of conversation but the conduct and character of neighbors. He has eyes and ears for nothing else but their modes of living, and the words which fall from their lips. If he meets you in the street, he has something very important to communicate, and details to you what he has picked up, derogatory to the character of your neighbor, perhaps your most intimate friend. If he calls at your house, he is very happy to see you, for he has something to communicate that will convince you of the shortcomings of others; or, if he meets you in the social circle, scarcely have the usual courtesies been exchanged, ere he returns to his old themes, and draws you aside, and entertains you with a detail of what others eat and drink and wear; who visit them, and whom they visit; where they go, and who goes with them; what they say, and what is said to them; at what hour they retire at night, and what hour they rise in the morning; when they ride, and when they walk. He can tell you of their origin; what their fathers did, and all about them. Such persons are subject to a mental hallucination, so that they can see only the dark side of personal character. They are never so happy as when a tale of scandal is brought to their ears. They are the first to become acquainted with the misconduct of others, or the suspicion of wrong doing, and the first to publish it; while, as they pass from hearer to hearer, the story grows beneath their plastic hands, and adorned by fancy, it becomes full of interest

and importance. They catch up every word that inadvertently falls from your lips, if it pertain to the past or present history of any human being, so that you are sure to possess all the facts and fancies of the case before the day is closed. Thus, by such wicked intermeddling they often cause coldness and suspicion to spring up between the most intimate friends. It requires but one such person, with a competent number of hearers, to keep a whole community in a state of excitement, or to destroy the peace and harmony of the church of God. Among the seven things God hates, are, a lying tongue; feet that be swift in running to mischief; a false witness, that speaketh lies, and he that sows discord among brethren. But,

2. Another manifestation of the sins of the tongue is that which in Scripture is called BACKBITING. This is closely allied to talebearing. The talebearer takes up what he hears from others, and magnifying it, spreads it abroad; the backbiter stands on a lower scale in depravity. He originates scandal. He has a more fertile imagination, a more inventive genius, and will impute evil, and speak freely against an absent one. He is the manufacturer of detraction; while the talebearer, by retelling what the backbiter has invented, becomes his co-partner in the baseness of destroying the good name of others. Backbiting is a detraction of another's character—a wilful misjudging of motives; that exception to their conduct and words that indicate a heart full of deceit, of evil and malignity. Such seldom speak of another, without an exception. Sometimes they will give a man credit for virtues which he never claimed, that they may the more effectually and fatally stab his reputation before they close his record. They will studiously conceal his real merits, and then wind up their detail with a significant *sic*, followed by a long catalogue of short-comings, which, if true, would exclude him from virtuous society, and with a very mysterious shake of the head, they leave their hearers in doubt whether the slandered person is not a felon that has escaped the hands of justice. Now, there are such persons in every community, who seem to delight in stabbing the character of their neighbors, and seeing their victims writhe in agony. The tongue can inflict a deeper and a more deadly wound than the two-edged sword. Well did the apostle say that "the tongue is set on fire of hell;" that that which causes the tongue to do so much mischief derives its origin from hell; while the tongue of the backbiter is moved by the spirit that reigns there. Among those who will ascend into heaven is the man "that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor." Consequently, a backbiter can have no rational hope of heaven; as he is actuated by the spirit of the devil, and does the work of a malignant fiend, he is a fiend in

carneate, and will have his portion with the devil and his angels in that hopeless world of woe; for certainly he is not fit for the society of the pure in heaven. Indeed, the very earth on which he treads loathes him, and society is relieved of an intolerable burden when such an one is removed. But

3. The most appalling form of evil speaking, and that to which the indulgence in other forms will lead, is when it rises to the enormity and malignity of SLANDER. To constitute slander, it is not necessary that the report be entirely false; it depends upon the *motives* with which it is repeated. Even what is true may become slander, when it is told with a purpose to injure an individual, and where neither the public good, nor the welfare of any one require the publication of such a report. In an action at law, the truth may be given in evidence in mitigation of damages; but even if true, it does not exonerate the slanderer, when it is done with a malicious intent to injure another; the law will not protect a deliberate, malicious slanderer. But we have to deal with the moral aspects of this evil. Not unfrequently a vague rumor is permitted to destroy the fairest character; and when the innocent victim finds himself the object of suspicion and aversion, neglected by former friends, he seeks in vain for a responsible indorser of the slander, while the author lies concealed amid the multitude that have given currency to the report; and when the falsehood of the charge is proven beyond all doubt, each one who has repeated the slander shelters himself behind the common but miserable apology, "they said so," and who they are must remain a mystery until the day when God shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness.

The slanderer is more to be dreaded and shunned than the midnight robber or highwayman. He is meaner and more to be despised than the man who feloniously enters your house by night. The burglar takes your property, while the slanderer robs you of that which gold cannot purchase and which is dearer than life itself. The slanderer has always existed ever since sin began its fearful work. The Psalmist speaks of him:—Solomon describes him. The apostles allude to his mischievous influence. He is a marked character in the history of our race. He pursues his work with a spirit of malignity, while he covers himself with the mantle of hypocrisy. Have you never seen him? Have you never suffered at his hand? Can you mistake his portrait? Do you not know such as we have described? Do you not know of some who can give you the history of every victim of their envenomed tongue? Such an one is cognizant of all their faults—has treasured up all their words—has never forgotten any of their wrong-doings or follies of their youth, and though blotted from the book of God's remembrance, they are not effaced from

the memory of the slanderer. Let the name of one of his victims be mentioned with commendation, and he is ready to unlock his storehouse of treasured misdoings and overwhelm him, for the slanderer has a relish for only what is impure, and can remember only what is wrong. He is unhappy when one is praised or respected. He overhauls the fairest character to find something foul and base on which to feed and fatten. He passes by whatever is amiable and lovely in character—to fasten on the failings to which even the best are subject. If perchance his victim should unexpectedly enter the circle where his character is being demolished, he is met with smiles of welcome and expressions of cordiality, and perhaps be told in a bland tone, "*we were just speaking of you,*" and as soon as he retires, the work of detraction is resumed and his character, if possible, is in ruins, or weighed down with suspicion. If the slanderer can find nothing in the *present*, which the world will censure, he will rake up the records of the *past*. He has a marvelous love for antiquity and will possess himself of the history, fame, and occupation of his victim's ancestors, or the early history of the unhappy subject of his assault, and in his hands every thing is turned to the worst possible uses. Would that such characters never were numbered among the disciples of Christ. But alas! even here in the church, where all should be harmony and love, such characters are found. Yes, and no one has more apparent sorrow for the wickedness of the age—none apparently so jealous for the glory of God, for the honor of religion—none so careful in *their* way, for the purity of those who bear the vessels of the Lord, and none who more deeply regrets that there are evils in the church, or laments the low state of piety, and talks so flipperantly about a revival of religion, than a hypocritical professor of religion, who is known in the community as a tale-bearer and slanderer. None do more mischief than this class of persons; none cause so great a reproach to the religion of Christ. Was it not such a character whom inspiration described, where we read, "*An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is a burning fire?*" His memory like the sepulchre retains nothing but dead men's bones and fearful masses of corruption. He knows nothing good of his neighbor. He will not tell you the worst, but leaves it to your imagination, after giving you mysterious hints and expressing great unwillingness to say anything to the injury of another. But who believes the canting hypocrite? The inimitable Pollock has drawn a picture of the slanderer that is worthy of being studied and carefully considered.

Slander, the foulest whelp of sin.
The man in whom this spirit entered was undone.
His tongue was set on fire of hell,—his heart was moved
Was black as death—and he was faint with haste

To propagate the lie his soul had framed;
 His pillow was the peace of families
 Destroyed, the sigh of innocence reproached;
 Broken friendships, and the strife of brotherhood;
 Yet did he spare his sleep, and hear the clock
 Number the midnight watches, on his bed
 Devising mischief more;—and early rose,
 And made most hellish meals of good men's names.
 From door to door you might have seen him speed,
 Or placed amidst a group of gaping fools,
 And whispering in their ears, with his soul lips,
 Peace fled the neighborhood in which he made
 His haunts:—and like a mortal pestilence,
 Before his breath, the healthy shoots and blooms
 Of social joy and happiness, decayed.
 Fools only in his company were seen,
 And those forsaken of God, and to themselves
 Given up. The prudent shunned him and his house
 As one who had a deadly, moral plague."

Such is a faint but truthful representation of the evils resulting from a free license to the tongue. It may be summed up thus:—The tale-bearer, or what is more commonly known by the significant term, "the gossip," relates in a confidential tone what has been said by others, it may be without malice, moved by a love to tell news, or to be the first to obtain possession of all important matters. The backbiter has descended to a lower level in the art of evil speaking. He manufactures and deals in suspicions, inuendoes, and hearsays, as matters of fact, while the slanderer has reached the climax of human depravity, and despicable meanness, regardless of consequences to others. He revels in blasting that which is most valued by the virtuous and the good—an unspotted reputation,

I pass to notice briefly the *guilt* of this practice of evil-speaking. I have described the character and employment of such persons; we will now consider the *guilt* they incur, and

1st. It violates the golden rule that should regulate all our conduct towards each other. Can he who takes up an evil report against another and goes from house to house to repeat it, be influenced by the rule, to do to others as he would be done by? Even if the report be true, and no good can be secured by repeating it, is it a proper employment for one, who, if he has never fallen himself, should be employed rather in reclaiming the erring?

2d. Evil speaking is a direct and palpable violation of the command of God. This is evident from the expressions of Scripture already referred to. The persons thus described are abhorrent to God and all holy beings. The talebearer and slanderer are specifically mentioned as excluded from all hope of heaven. They sin directly against the position commanded of

God, who said "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

3d. It excites the worst human passions that stimulate to action. It excites and fosters bitter *enmity*, implacable *hatred*, and a spirit of *revenge*. It tends to numerous and terrible evils, while it nerves the arm of desperation to deeds of blood. It drives its chariot over alienated friendships, amidst the ruins of social and domestic peace which it has caused, and gathers its garlands of victory from the graves of its victims who fall a prey to this foul spirit of detraction. And,

4th. It is the prolific source of the greatest troubles that afflict families, neighborhoods, and churches. It is difficult to detect it so as to counteract its influence, until it has accomplished its work of destruction. It conceals its shiny footprints by its pretended friendship, or covers its trail with the mantle of hypocrisy, and does its work of mischief under the guise of religion and a desire for the glory of God. Who can estimate the amount of mischief that results from this one source—evil speaking—in breaking up the peace of the church, the harmony of neighborhoods, the alienation of friends? Then to this vast amount who can estimate the terrible consequences of a single word—or but a whisper—a surmise that is hinted to one eager to catch it and spread it abroad? From the smallest beginnings, from so small a cause, has many a fair character been sullied, and days and months of anguish experienced from the slightest suspicion that envy could breathe, or malice suggest. How many a fire-side has been darkened by its terrible shadow! How many a life has been forever embittered thereby! How many a pure and gentle being has been foully and cruelly wronged by some, who, envying her position, her accomplishments, her reputation and character, have sought by detraction and slander to make that character as black and as hideous as themselves? Many a gentle being has been crushed by the fell spirit of slander and found refuge in an untimely grave from the gaze of a suspicious world. A sweet songstress has set forth this evil in a form which but too often finds a counterpart in the history of some fair one.

"A whisper woke the air—
A soft, light tone, and low,
Yet barbed with shame and woe;
Ah! might it only perish there,
Nor farther go!
But, no; a quick and eager ear
Caught up the little meaning sound,
Another voice has breathed it clear,
And so it wandered round
From ear to lip, from lip to ear,
Until it reached a gentle heart
That throbbed from all the world

Apart, and *that it broke!*
 It was the only heart it found—
 The only heart it meant to find,
 When first its accents woke.
 It reached that gentle heart
 At last, and *that it broke!*
 Low as it seemed to other ears,
 It came a thunder-crash to her's—
 That fragile girl—so fair—so gay!
 And thus her heart, unused to shame—
 Her light and happy heart that beat
 With love and hope, so fast and sweet,
 When first that cruel word it heard,
 It fluttered like a frightened bird,
 Then shut its wings and sighed,
 And, with a silent shudder—*died!*"

Is this picture overdrawn? And can they be guiltless before God, who by a single look or word, aid in giving currency to a report that destroys the hope and life of a fellow-being? Very much of a man's happiness depends on the estimate in which he is held by others. With many, their good name is their whole earthly estate. No good citizen can be careless of his reputation. "A good name is rather to be desired than great riches." Who would wish to live without a good name? Words thoughtlessly or intentionally dropped, often contain in them elements of destruction before which a virtuous character has withered and died.

Finally, evil speaking, in addition to all the other mischief it has caused, has done more to hinder the church of God in its mission of mercy than almost any other, or all other evils. Some of the most alarming dissensions that have occurred have been the result of slight misunderstandings, easily explained at first, but were fanned into a flame by the ready tongue of the scandal-monger. Words carelessly dropped, and without any wrong intent on the part of the speaker, have been caught up and repeated—motives misjudged, and actions and looks misconstrued, until "trifles, light as air," have grown into evils of frightful dimensions. Friends have been separated, parties formed, and fierce conflicts have waged, until evils have resulted which years could not remove, and the means of grace become of no saving effect. These evils are aggravated by the fact that the parties to such unhappy strifes are numbered among the followers of Christ. But the largest charity cannot include all who cry, Lord, Lord. There are certain indications that will develop the character, and one of the strongest marks against a man who claims to be a Christian, is the habit of evil speaking. The apostle uses strong language on this point. If a man professes to be a Christian, and bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain. He may make long prayers, and earnest

exhortations; he may talk of religious enjoyment—because he delights to hear himself talk—he may deplore the vices of the age, and pretend to great sanctity of life, and purity of breast, but if he bridle not his tongue, his religion is vain; he is a stumbling-block to those without. Such are the inevitable results of evil speaking. But these are only the outward manifestations and fruits of evil speaking. I have not attempted to describe the anguish of that sensitive spirit into which the poisoned arrow of slander has entered, even to the seat of life, and is fast drinking up its life currents. I am not competent to the task. I know of no language that can express the anguish of that heart that has been made to feel the power of the slanderer's tongue. The full extent of the mischief can never be known in this world—we must wait the revelations of the judgment. But enough is seen to call for the sternest rebuke and indignant frown of any right-minded, virtuous citizen. It exists to a fearful extent in every community; but, like many other sins, evil speaking is sure to find its author out. Sooner or later, the poisoned cup which they have mixed for others will be passed to their own lips; they must eat of the fruit of their own doings, and gather the harvest they have so bountifully sowed; for, as they sow, so must they reap. There is such an attribute as retributive justice, and though it may seem to delay, it will surely overtake the guilty. Neither age, sex, profession or condition escapes the envenomed tongue of the slanderer. I shall close with suggesting a remedy for this common evil:

1. *Let each seek to obtain a correct view of himself.*

There is enough in the heart of each one to occupy all his thoughts, without his searching out the failings of his neighbors. The shortcomings of others afford no justification for our own misdeeds. It often happens that those the most eager to report evil of others are themselves the most vulnerable, and could the least bear the scrutiny of truth.

2. Another remedy for this great social evil, this moral blight, is to cultivate the spirit of love to all. If we discover infirmities and failings (as all have more or less), let us look away from these blemishes, and fix our eye upon the good qualities they possess, for there is something lovely in most, though the evil may greatly outweigh the good. The heart that is under the influence of Christian love will not permit its possessor to deal in scandal. The gossip lacks the most essential evidence of piety. But there is a wide difference between the timely warning of a friend, and the act of one who, from the mere love of telling something new or marvelous, gives publicity to matters which can be of no benefit to publish to the world.

A third remedy is, never to allow ourselves to be made the

repositories of rumors prejudicial to others. It is a burden which no right-minded person should be willing to assume. To give countenance to a talebearer is like heading a mob to destroy a neighbor's house: to-morrow, the same mob, under another leader, may destroy the property of him who leads them to-day. It is a hazardous undertaking. In many circles, personal characters are canvassed from a simple want of higher objects of conversation, or incompetency to sustain conversation upon proper subjects. The true Christian, whose thoughts are occupied with the interests of the soul, and the interests of religion, will find no pleasure in listening to tales of scandal, be they true or false. He takes no part in publishing the misdeeds of others. The tongue and hand can find better and more noble employment than this. Let all whose consciences convict them of the sin of evil speaking, labor to overcome this habit by doing justice to those whom they have wronged, and sin no more in this respect. This evil would be greatly abated if all who love peace and harmony would no longer listen to a tale of scandal. The occupation of the slanderer will be gone, when persons of position and character refuse to listen to their tales. Though these things are sometimes done in the church, there are many honorable exceptions. There are those whose hands are clean in this respect, and we would not willingly utter a word that should give pain to any; but the evil is great, and should be rebuked. Let all aim to be occupied with higher thoughts than the sins of others, and forget not that by our "words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned." All the tales of scandal, with their legitimate results will enter into the transactions of the judgment day. Now, consider this, you that forget that God has said: *"Thou shalt not bear false witness."*

2. Another remedy for this great social evil, this non-light, is to cultivate the spirit of love to all. If we discover hatred and ill-will (as all have more or less) let us look away from these dishonors and fix our eye upon the good qualities they possess, for there is something lovely in most, though the evil may greatly outweigh the good. The point that is under the influence of Christian love will not permit its possessor to feel in scandal. The gossip lacks the most essential element of grace. But there is a wide difference between the kind words of a friend and the act of one who from the mere love of telling something new or newsworthy gives implicitly to matters which can be of no benefit to the world. A third remedy is never to allow ourselves to become the